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III

THE ABORIGINES OF THE SOVIET FAR EAST

There are about 60,000 aborigines in the Soviet Far East (excluding Yakutia and Buryat-Mongolia) belonging to over a dozen different nationalities. The ethnographers divide them into two main groups. The first group, the Paleoasiats, includes the Chukchi, the Koryaks, the Asiatic Eskimos, the Aleuts, Ainu, Nivkhi and Kamchadals. Of the second, the Manchu-Tunguz peoples, the most important are the Tunguz proper, or Evenki, the coastal Tunguz, or Eveni, the Nanai and the Udege. Politically and sociologically all these nationalities must be considered as one single entity. The Soviet régime has treated them quite differently from the Korean, Chinese and Japanese minorities. As the small groups of aborigines are unable to handicap Russian colonization, the Communist Party has patronised them, and Soviet propaganda has always devoted a great deal of publicity to them, even at a time when there was complete silence about the Koreans and Chinese of the Soviet Far East. This does not necessarily mean that Soviet Russia has handled the problems of the Far Eastern aborigines successfully.

TWO VIEWS ON NATIVE POLICY

In the first years following the October Revolution the most authoritative Russian anthropologists felt that the time had come to take special measures to protect the Far Eastern and Far Northern natives from the pernicious influences of European civilization. Demands to that effect were voiced, in the winter of 1921–22, in the organ of the People's Commissariat for Nationalities, *Zhizn Natsionalnostei*. The most remarkable contribution to the problem of the small nationalities came from Professor Vladimir Germanovich Bogoraz-Tan (1865–1936), who had a profound knowledge of the problems of the tribes of North-Eastern Siberia, particularly of the Chukchi. Professor Bogoraz suggested that the Soviet Government should draw the lessons from certain experiments carried out in the native territories of Canada, the United States, Brazil and Argentina. It seemed vital to him that the mode of

133 "golets"), which means the same as "baldy" or "bald-head." These goltsy, which appear in Transbaykal only in individual instances, are extremely typical for all mountain areas in the Far Eastern region.

•101 311 Culturally, too, Transbaykal has to a remarkable degree a transitional character. The steppe regions, the steppe valleys, and the steppe islands have since time immemorial been the seat of nomadic cattle-breeders, in this case the Buryat, an intelligent and energetic tribe of Mongols, who have kept themselves on the steppes which suit their nature and culture. It is interesting to determine how exactly their expansion even today coincides with their natural landscape. The Buryat penetrate only rarely into the forest areas; more often they leave these to the forest peoples of the Tungus, who even today live there still as hunters and reindeer breeders. The Buryat were the first people to give successful resistance for a time to the invading Cossacks, but as nomads they later had to clear the field for the Russians who were seeping in slowly and pursuing agriculture. Buryat helped themselves, however, by adjusting: they often went over to agriculture themselves, and they appropriated for themselves the advantages of Russian culture. Thus, even though they were penetrated by Russians, they were able to retain their original regions and to attain a cultural level which raised them above all their Mongolian tribal brothers on the other side of the Soviet Russian border. Because of the invasion by the Russians, there came into existence here a cultivated landscape which was inserted between the completely forested areas in the north and the pure steppes in the south; but corresponding to the spacious transition region, this cultivated landscape did not appear in a closed-off zone, but in culture islands. In extensive regions in the south near the border, the Buryat even today still lead their old nomadic, cattle-breeding life.

132 The fact that the bulk of the rainfall occurs in the summer is favorable for agriculture. Chita, lying in the middle of the land, has an annual rainfall of only 319 millimeters. However, 289 millimeters of this falls during the vegetation period so that a relatively sufficient [243] amount of dampness is available, in conjunction with continental warmth, to make possible a very high yield of summer wheat. This makes Transbaykal an important wheat producer and the principal supplier for all of east Siberia.

133 The Amur country is adjacent to Transbaykal, without a clear border, north of the northern arc of the Amur. In its large morphological traits it is no less varied than Transbaykal, though the differences in

from the Oka, a left tributary of the Angara, to the Onon and Argun steppes in the east. At that time they already knew how to extract salt and to process iron. They were known as the trade middlemen between the Tungus hunting peoples and the Chinese. From the Tungus they acquired valuable furs (sable) by barter in exchange for food, especially millet, and these furs they exchanged with Chinese traders for silver and goods from China. In this period, under the leadership of the "Noyone," the tribal divisions had been transformed into fixed, almost state-like organizations, which were in a position to give successful resistance to the Cossacks pressing in in the seventeenth century. The first information which the Cossacks received of Transbaykal described the land as having a wealth of valuable furs and silver. 175

Even the Irkutsk Buryat accomplished vigorous resistance, and in many instances smaller Cossack divisions were defeated or annihiliated. In the course of battles lasting years the Cossacks succeeded in getting a foothold in Transbaykal in individual bases, which were built up into small fortresses. In 1646 Verkhne Angarsk was founded at the mouth of the Upper Angara on Lake Baykal, in 1648 Barguzin was founded, Nerchinsk in 1654, Selenginsk /now: Novo-Seleginsk/ in 1665, Verkhne Udinsk (Ulan-Ude) in 1666. Nevertheless the Buryat did not submit so easily to the will of the Cossacks, whose power did not extend far beyond the bases. Twice great uprisings broke out, and for months the bases were cut off from all contact and exposed to a severe siege. Smaller posts were pillaged, the personnel slaughtered, and the buildings destroyed. However, in the long run the Buryat could not hold out against the firearms and the better organization of the Russians. Many retreated into Mongolia, but from there they again and again /104/ made attacks. Only after the Treaty of Nerchinsk in 1639 did peace return to the land. With that colonization by the Russians began.

The Old Peoples

Three groups can be distinguished among the old peoples presently occupying Transbaykal and the far eastern region: the Mongols, the Tungus, and the Paleoasiatics. The Buryat are the sole representative of the Mongols in Baykal, while the Tungus and Paleoasiatic peoples are distributed over the entire far eastern region. 101 144

The Buryat occupy the region west and east of Lake Baykal.

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101 563 Their entire number in 1939 was around 280,000. They are divided into the Irkutsk and the Transbaykal Buryat. The former, numbering approximately 100,000, live in the Irkutsk region and enjoy cultural autonomy in the Ust'-Orda Krai. The Transbaykal Buryat are united in the Buryat-Mongol ASSR. Nevertheless, they constitute only 43.8 percent of the population of this ASSR (1941), and the Russians are in the majority. Buryat live in large numbers also in the Chita region, especially in the Aginsk /Aga/ Steppe south of Chita, where they have their own administration in a national district. The Buryat are regarded as a branch of the Mongols and are contrasted with the Khalkha
563 Mongols in Outer Mongolia. As history shows, a part of this people early became sedentary, especially west of Lake Baykal. In the steppes of Transbaykal, however, the major part of the people remained typical Mongolian nomads until the very recent past. Gmelin, who traveled the land in the eighteenth century, reports that numerous Buryat had herds of thousands of sheep and hundreds of reindeer and horses. Georgi, who spent time in Transbaykal in the same century, writes that individual Daur Buryat own up to 1,000 camel, 4,000 horses, 2,000 to 3,000 reindeer, 8,000 sheep, and hundreds of goats. Even if these numbers may be exaggerated, they show nevertheless that animal breeding was the basis of the economic life of the Buryat. After the invasion of the Russians they were able to adjust in advantageous fashion to the changed situation, and a large part of the people went over to agriculture. There remained for them simply no other way, since the Russian settlers took the best pasture lands from them and transformed them into tilled land. Pressed into unfavorable areas, they proceeded with remarkable energy and without European guidance to create their own tilled land through artificial irrigation, especially in the river region of the Selenga and in the Barguzin Valley. However, in the southern steppes of Transbaykal they have /105/ retained their original occupation, cattle raising, in which they have made extraordinary accomplishments. The Buryat Republic belongs today
563 to the most important cattle surplus areas in the Soviet Union. Many
177 interesting features of their own folk life have been lost through the introduction of kolkhoz economy and modern cattle-raising methods. Thus the felt yurts occupied of old have simply disappeared and have been replaced by small, practical wooden houses. However, there are still regions in Transbaykal where the Buryat continue their nomadic life unhindered, even though everywhere the influence of Russiandom grows stronger and stronger. At most the Irkutsk Buryat and the

Lamut, Goldi

Transbaykal Buryat, who have gone over to agriculture and are living among the Russians, are under this influence. Nevertheless their intelligence and their self-consciousness, qualities which have always been praised in them, create for them again and again a position of their own, and expression is given to this in the autonomous soviet republic and in the two national districts.

The Tungus or Evenki, as they are now named in Soviet literature, are to be encountered in all of east Siberia. Their entire number is estimated at 75,000. Of these the real Tungus, with about 30,000 people, live in an extended national district /okrug?/ west of the Yakut ASSR on the right side of the Yenisey. The main part of the remaining Tungus, who are divided into numerous small and very small splinter peoples, live in the far eastern area. To them belong the Lamut, Goldi, Olcha, Orok, Orochi, Orochon, and other smaller tribes. The Lamut, whose name is taken from the Tungus word "lamu," "the sea," live widely scattered over the entire Okhotsk coast, the upper basin of the Anadyr', and are also represented on Kamchatka. Their entire number undoubtedly cannot exceed 3,000. Only a small part of them occupy themselves with reindeer breeding. Most of them are sendentary and have fixed settlements at river mouths on the sea, where they apply themselves to catching fish and in addition are also active as hunters and dog breeders. The Lamut can be designated as sea or coastal Tungus. Their ethnology has been studied very little. Much better known are the Goldi. They live in the region of the confluence of the Amur and Ussuri and are also scattered in the valley of the Ussuri and in Sikhote-Alin'. They are settled most thickly in the valley of the Amur below Khabarovsk. Among the Goldi the Mongolian racial marks are very strongly apparent: jaw and cheek bones stand out, the nose is broad and low, hair is black and straight. They used to make their clothing in part from fishskin, and it is for this reason that they were named "Yupi-tadsy," i.e., barbarians in fish clothing, by the Chinese. At present this national costume of the Goldi has been completely displaced by clothing of Russian or Chinese origin. The Goldi occupy themselves exclusively with fishing, hunting, dog breeding, and trapping. A supply of fish is dried in the air for winter and serves then as nourishment for man and dog. /106/ Usually the fish are cooked, but in the summer they also eat them raw. They regard as delicacies raw marrow and the liver of the isiubr stag. The wagon is unknown to the Goldi as a means of transportation. In summer they use a birch bark or board boat, and in the winter dog sleds.

Goldi, Olcha, Orochi

101 563 in the winter dog sleds. The position of the women is difficult. [342] Polygamy is permitted. Bride purchase remains today. The Goldi live in small settlements of two to twenty houses, which are built out of mud like Chinese fang-tze /Fansen/. Many of them are half sunk in the earth. In the summer, however, the Goldi gladly leaves his fixed house and moves into his original domed tent, which is covered with birchbark or bast mats. In more recent times many Goldi have taken up the cultivation of vegetables, and they also breed pigs and chickens. The Samaghir, who live on the Gorin, a left tributary of the lower Amur, can be named as relatives of the Goldi. Their culture corresponds to that of the Goldi, but many expressions in their language indicate that they formerly were reindeer breeders. At present they devote themselves exclusively to fishing and hunting. Further downstream live the Olcha, who have also spread to the coast of the Tatar Strait and to Sakhalin. On Sakhalin they call themselves the Orok. The Olcha are also hunters, fishermen, and dog breeders. However, in contrast to the semi-nomadic Goldi, they are sedentary, and they all pursue agriculture in slight measure. Various signs indicate that they also were once reindeer breeders as their relatives, the Orok on Sakhalin, still are today. The total number of Olcha and Orok can scarcely exceed 2,000. More numerous--around 2,500--are the Orochi, who are also often called Udekhe (after the river Udekhe). Split up into numerous small groups, they live in the valleys of the middle and southern Sikhote-Alin' and also on the side toward the sea and the Ussuri. [179] Many of them, especially in the south, are under Chinese influence and speak, reside, and live in a Chinese fashion. However, in the heart of Sikhote-Alin' they have remained rather pure and still live as true forest people, as Arseniev described them, and they show pronounced [141] Tungus traits. The men on the average are 1.60 meters tall, and the women 1.45 meters. Their small hands and feet are striking. [301] Like the Goldi they once wore ear and nose rings, and this custom still exists among the Orochi-Udekhe, although only among the [342] women. They still live in pointed tents in contrast to the domed tents of the Goldi, in which the tent poles are bent together to form a dome and which recall, in their form, the yurts of the Mongols. On long trips, however, the Orochi did not take his tent along, since the tent was too burdensome for him; instead, while he was on his way, he built a simple protective tent out of twigs. The pure Orochi is only a hunter and fisherman. The social order of this people is

Orochi, Gilyak

The social order of this people is peculiar. A council of elders and experienced /107/ people directs the settlement. Everyone is free in his activity, but submits to the community. Every acquisition, every hunting bag is distributed not only among the family but also through the entire settlement. Thus families whose heads go on longer hunting trips and are often away for weeks are taken care of. In the marriage customs there are remnants of group marriage. Faith and superstition are extraordinarily strongly developed. They believe in various gods such as the forest god and the sea god, and they see all of nature animated by spirits. The practical religion, however, is shamanism. The bear is the totem animal. A bear's head is eaten ceremonially and communally in an annual festival. A peculiarity is that a sick person is left when the first signs of death appear, and they return to him only when he is dead. They also avoid the graves of the dead who are buried in the earth, and they also do not disturb the environs of the graves.

Of the other Tungus peoples there are still living in the Amur region a few Manchu, Daur, and Solon, who immigrated from Manchuria. In Transbaykal there is still to be mentioned the Orochon, who live in the taiga of the Chita region and are hunters primarily. Reindeer breeding is of less importance among them.

Of the Paleoasiatics only the Gilyak remain in the Amur region and the Ainu on Sakhalin. The main part live in the extreme northeast and consist of Chukchee, Koryak, and Kamchadal, and in addition to these still another group, consisting of Eskimo and Aleut, should be mentioned.

The Gilyak live on the lower Amur and on the coast north and south of the Amur's mouth. Their number is estimated at approximately 2,000. In external features they approach the type of the Tungus-Manchu peoples, but their language deviates completely from the dialects of the Tungus-Manchu peoples, and even from the dialects of the other Paleoasiatic peoples, and recalls the idioms of individual Indian tribes of Northwest America. Dog, seal, and fish skins, in particular, are used for the manufacture of clothing. Their main occupation is fishing and hunting sea animals. However, in the winter they also hunt bears and sables. They always build their dwellings on rivers or near the coast, and they always have a summer and a winter house, which are often right next to one another. Even in the last century they used in winter a "subterranean yurt," as Schrenck named it, an earthen cave, such as was customary among the Koryak and Kamchadal until a few decades ago. One can conclude from this that

Gilyak, chukchee

101 563 [342] earth dwellings must have been the original winter dwelling of the Paleoasiatics. Even today the Gilyak on the northern coast of Sakhalin live in such earthen caves. The Gilyak on the Amur live at present in primitively built Chinese mud huts. The summer dwelling consists of a tent built on poles partly for protection against floods and further for reasons of better /108/ ventilation. This type of pile dwelling is [171] not to be encountered among any Tungus people; it, however, still exists today among the Kamchadal, who are likewise a Paleoasiatic people. The sole domestic animal is the dog. The Gilyak dog sled, [493] the narta, is built out of birchwood and is very light. The dogs are not harnessed in pairs but individually, and they don't pull with their chest but with their neck. The main food of the Gilyak is fish dried [262] in the air, which they name "ma." Today they also use the same word for bread. They like very much to eat dog and bear meat too. [141] A few decades ago they still were using only bows, arrows, and lances for hunting. Even today they wear on the right index finger--now, of course, as decoration--a metal ring, which formerly served to pro- [583] tect the finger from the stretching of the bow. Group marriage was still customary among the Gilyak in 1905. In their spiritual life, [776] worship of the bear plays a large role; this is a common mark of all Paleoasiatic peoples. Worship of the bear is also practised among the Tungus, but not so markedly; and even among the Russian occupants of the taiga this custom has not remained without influence. Of the Ainu only a part live on Sakhalin; the great majority live on the northern Japanese islands.

The Paleoasiatics in the northeast fall into two groups. The western group consists of the Chukchee, Koryak, and Kamchadal, who are closely related to one another; the eastern group consists of the Asiatic Eskimo and the Aleut. When the Russians first encountered the Paleoasiatic peoples here in the far north, they were still in part on the cultural level of the Stone Age and used stone hachets, stone knives, and weapons with bone points. Even today they show many ancient traits.

The Chukchee or Luoravetlan occupy the peninsula named after them. Some of them are settled on seacoasts and pursue fishing and the hunting of sea animals; some, living as reindeer nomads, [342] traverse the tundra-covered peninsula. A large pointed tent with a round base serves as a dwelling for both groups. It consists of poles placed together and covered with reindeer skins or walrus hides; on the outside down below they are weighted down with stones. The

Chukchee, Koryak 101 563

material life of the Maritime Chukchee, who number approximately 3,000, is completely the same as that of the Eskimo. They use the same leather boat, the kayak, and the metal harpoon with a float made of an inflated sealskin, and many other things. On the other hand the Reindeer Chuckchee are completely nomadic and have shown themselves to be extraordinarily good reindeer breeders. They number only about 9,000, but they have around half a million reindeer. But still reindeer breeding does not appear to have been their original sphere, for many idioms as well as marks of their dwelling indicate that they also once lived on the banks of the sea; reindeer breeding was perhaps taken over later from the neighboring Tungus. Thus, /109/ as Bogoras (37) reports, the interior of the sleeping section of

[501] [174]

37. V. Bogoras. The Chukchee (New York, 1904/1908).

the tent is designated as the "skin of the white bear" by the Reindeer Chukchee, even though at present not bear skin but rather only reindeer skin serves as walls and bed covering both for the Reindeer and the Maritime Chukchee. Peculiar is the belief of the Chukchee that a life after death is attained only by a person who has had a violent death, and it was not long ago that, out of a kind of sympathy, they killed their own people who were weakened by age or unfit for life; this custom is also reported among the North American Eskimo. The Chukchee, Koryak, and Kamchadal generally show many traits related to those of the Indians of northwest America, and it is for this reason that Bogoras classifies as "Americanoid" the entire group of Paleoasiatics, including the Gilyak mentioned earlier.1/ Myths and sagas coincide both in content and in form, often down to details, with those of the northwest American Indians. Accordingly the assumption should not be dismissed that the Chukchee, Koryak, and Kamchadal once were immediate neighbors of the Indians, and that only at a later time did the Eskimo shove in between them.

[961] [171]

The Koryak, now also designated as Nymylan, occupy the northern half of Kamchatka and the adjacent continent. Their number is estimated at around 10,000. Like the Chukchee they are divided in half into the Maritime Koryak and the Reindeer Koryak. The former are sedentary and above all fishermen, and their life approaches in significant measure that of the Eskimo. They also hunt sea animals such as the walrus, the seal, and occasionally also the whale. They are already extensively absorbed into the Russian culture and live

1/ [Cf. cat. 116, pp. 118-119 -- Analyst]

Koryak, Kamchadal

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563

together in villages in crudely constructed wooden houses. The leather boats, which they still use for hunting and fishing, are disappearing more and more. The Reindeer Koryak have also already grown far from their original culture. They are primarily reindeer breeders and own large herds. They live nomadic life wandering between the valley regions protected from the wind in the winter and the gnat-free mountainous tundra in the summer. The square winter hut, which is built from wood and is half sunk in the earth, is built in imitation of the Russian house. They recall the old pit dwelling of Europe. Only in the summer do they use their round, transportable tent, which in its original form consisted of a framework of poles covered with reindeer skins. Today, however, it is often only a type of board shanty, since their wanderings are mostly limited to short stretches. The winter huts as a rule lie on rivers and are permanent constructions. Older people often remain in the winter huts even in the summer, and accordingly the Koryak must be designated as semi-nomadic. Physically the Koryak are medium to short in height with straight black hair, slight growth of hair on the face, and brown-bronze skin color. They make their clothes out of reindeer, wolf and dog skins, and they make lighter clothing for the summer from seal skin. In this /110/ they show a color-happy feeling for art and decorate their clothing with strips of hide of different colors or with leather which they form into various ornaments.

[342] [142] [281]

The Kamchadal or Itelmen occupy the southern part of Kamchatka Peninsula, primarily the southern part of the western coast and the Kamchatka valley. Their number earlier must have been much greater, for old reports speak of tens of thousands. Today their number can scarcely be determined since a very large part of the people have been completely Russianized. Many have almost forgotten their own language. It is interesting that numerous Russians in the first wave of colonizers are completely absorbed in the Kamchadal and cannot be distinguished from them at all in mode of living and customs. In some villages on the western coast between Zedanka and Zepochnoye there are still pure Kamchadal, who number around 800 (1930). Often these people alone are designated as Itelmen and contrasted to the Kamchadal. They have abandoned their original earth hut, which can still be encountered in the interior as a base for hunters, and they live in clumsy wooden houses of the Russian type. Fishing is their principal occupation. In the winter, however, they move into the mountains to hunt fur animals. Their houses stand unordered in loose groups on the rivers. When the

[177] [342]

when the Kamchadal, Eskimo 101 ●
salmon run begins, festivals of joy and work begin for young and old. 563
As a rule the fish are caught in fixed traps, which are drawn across [226]
the river so that the way is barred for the fish as they go upstream.
The fish press together in great masses in front of this weir and are
caught with simple scoop nets. The common drying place is never [251]
empty, for it is important to preserve as many fish as possible for the
entire year by drying them. In addition, an older method is still used
occasionally: the fish are buried in the earth and there becomes sour;
hence there is a kind of fish silo from which fish can be fetched during
the winter as needed. A penetrating fish smell fills the entire settle-
ment, and there is no end to eating during the catching season. It
is not too much to say that the Kamchadal live on fish and tea. The [231]
dog, the most important domestic animal and beast of burden for all
sedentary native northeast Siberians, is also fed on fish. The num-
ber of dogs is considered as the mark of wealth. There are families
which have 200 to 300 dogs, which are housed in a pen near the house
and fill the entire region with their hoarse barking. It is inadvisable
for strangers to go near these half-wild animals. At present the horse
is spreading more and more and is beginning to displace the dog as
the beast of burden. Through the state organization of fishing and the
introduction of modern methods, large sections of the Koryak have
also been incorporated and placed in a new order. Many have also
turned to agriculture and cattle-breeding.

/111/ The Asiatic Eskimo live on the banks of Bering Strait
and occupy 17 villages with approximately 1,600 people. They ex- [174]
tended much further formerly; and it is for this reason that there are
Eskimo names for places now occupied by Maritime Chukchee. The
displacement of the Eskimo must have been done simply by force, for
the sagas of the Chukchee are filled with reports of hard battles with
the Eskimo, battles which, however, ended long before the entrance
of the Russians. Today the two peoples live harmoniously beside one
another in separate villages. The Asiatic Eskimo differ from their
relatives in Alaska in their speech but culturally they form a unit with
them. With their life completely directed toward the sea, they seldom
go into the interior of the land; for such occasions they use dog sleds.
On the Commander Islands live approximately 500 Aleut, who, ac-
cording to their language, are related to the Eskimo. They, too,
live completely from catching sea animals, since the islands offer
them only birds.

As has already been said, the Buryat Mongols have a cultural